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January 23, 2001 LB 135

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Chair of the Natural Resources Committee, Senator Schrock, you're recognized to open on the bill.

SENATOR SCHROCK: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, LB 135 is actually LB 904 from last session. It was advanced by your committee with unanimous approval. This bill allows natural resource districts in ground water management areas to limit or prevent the expansion of irrigated acres. It permits them...it allows them to close all or a portion of a management area to the issuance of additional permits or may condition the issuance of additional permits so long as a determination is made by the district that the impact on surface water supplies or the depletion or contamination of the ground water supply cannot be protected through implementation of other reasonable controls. This bill was brought to us by the Upper Republican NRD and our Natural Resources Commission. It removes the requirement that different water allocations for different irrigation districts...distribution systems be for a period of no more than five years. So, if they want to allocate water or want to have a different way of distributing water in their natural resource district, they can do it for more than a period of five years. At the present time they cannot exceed five years. It allows ground water users to use his or her allocation on all or any part of the irrigated acres to which the allocation applies, or in any other manner approved by the district. A lot of times people may irrigate 160 acres, but they may use more than...more water on one half of it than the other half. It removes the requirement that the district at least once every three years review any allocation rotation or reduction controls; it allows the district to determine how often such reviews are necessary. And, as I said, this bill was brought to the committee on behalf of the natural resource districts, more specifically the Upper Republican NRD. And the Upper Republican NRD is in Senator Baker's district; it is an area of the state where they have had significant groundwater declines. It is the area of Benkelman, Grant and Imperial. If you have any questions, I'll try to answer that. And even though this NRD is the one that is really concerned about this now, I would anticipate in the future more NRDs will be involved with these regulations.